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Cain, Son of the Fallen Angel Samael

What made Cain capable of murdering his brother? Why was the flood generation so wicked? According to Pirquei de-Rabbi Eliezer, the fallen angel Samael embodies the serpent and seduces Eve, whereupon she conceives Cain. Engendered by this “bad seed,” all the descendants of Cain become corrupt, destined to be wiped out by mighty waters.

Prof. Rabbi Rachel Adelman



Fallen angel and serpent, Madrid. Alvy/Wikimedia

In the wake of the banishment from Eden, Adam and Eve start their family:

בראשית ד: א וַהֲאָדָם יָדַע אֶת־חַוָּה
אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתַּהַר וַתֵּלֶד אֶת־קַיִן וַתֹּאמֶר
קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה.

Gen 4:1 And the man [*ha- 'adam*] knew
Eve, his woman, and she conceived and
bore Cain, and she said: “I have gotten
(or “created”)^[1] a man with YHWH.”^[2]

Why does Eve refer to her infant as a “man” [*ish*]? Would it not have been more natural to refer to him as בן “son”? Even stranger is her claim that she produced this man “with YHWH.”

In keeping with the verse's opening, that Adam “knew his wife” in the proverbial biblical sense, classic rabbinic sources interpret the phrase to be an expression of her thanksgiving to YHWH for allowing her to conceive.^[3]

And yet, Eve might literally have meant that YHWH was the father. In her naiveté, the causal relationship between sexual intercourse, conception and birth may have eluded the first mother, and so she ascribed the birth of her first child to God. The other possible meaning points to an actual divine impregnation.^[4] But if this is the case, why note that Adam knew his wife? Who is the father: Adam or YHWH?

The Conception of Abel

No similar note marks the birth of Abel; he is simply born:

בראשית ד:ב	Gen 4:2	She further bore his brother
וַתֵּסֶף לֵלֶדֶת אֶת אָחִיו		
אֶת הָאֵל...	Abel...	

Noting the abruptness of the note here, Genesis Rabbah suggests that Cain and Abel were twins (Bereishit 22, Theodor-Albeck ed.):

וְתוֹסֵף לֵלֶדֶת תּוֹסֶפֶת לְיִלְדָּהּ וְלֹא	“She then bore” —another birthing but
תּוֹסֶפֶת לְעִיבוֹר.	not another pregnancy.

We are also not informed who named Abel or why this name was chosen. It means “breath,” and can have the connotation of vanity or nothingness (as it does throughout Ecclesiastes), and so foreshadows his early demise without offspring at the hands of his jealous brother Cain, who, in turn, is condemned to wander the earth.

The Differing Conceptions of Cain and Abel

The very different descriptions of Cain's and Abel's conceptions led the mid-8th century narrative midrash, Pirke deRabbi Eliezer (PRE),^[5] to suggest that the two boys had different fathers. Rather than presenting YHWH as the father of Cain, as implied by the verse, it understands Cain as the son of a divine being, a ‘fallen angel’, who lusted after Eve.^[6] This idea was strengthened by the strange description of Cain being born “a man,” by Abel's sacrifice being acceptable to God, and by Cain's inclination to evil, culminating in the slaying of his brother.

The midrash opens with an allegorical reading of the Garden of Eden story.^[7] The tree is likened to a man (as in Deut. 20:19), the garden likened to the woman (Song of Songs 4:12), the phrase “in the midst of the Garden”

to her inner body in which the tree is planted. Thus, the distinction between the permitted fruit and the forbidden fruit concerns the source of the seeding: The resultant progeny may turn out to be good or evil depending on the paternal source.^[8]

The text then describes how Eve was impregnated by Samael in the guise of a serpent, and then by Adam (PRE 21):^[9]

בא אליה ורוכבת נחש ועברה את קין ואחר כך [בא אליה אדם ו]עברה את הבל שנאמר "והאדם ידע את חוה אשתו" (בר' ד:א). מהו ידע? שהיתה מעוברת וראתה [את] דמותו שלא היה מן התחתונים אלא מן העליונים והביטה ואמרה "קניתי איש את י"י" (בר' ד:א)	He [Samael] came to her, and she rode the Serpent,^[10] and conceived Cain. Afterwards, Adam came to her, and she conceived Abel, as it is said, "And Adam knew Eve, his wife" (Gen 4:1). What is meant by "knew"? (He knew) that she had conceived. And she saw his likeness that it was not of the lower beings, but of the heavenly beings, and she saw and said: "I have acquired a man by the Lord" (Gen 4:1).^[11]
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The midrash wrenches the meaning of Genesis 4:1 from the plain sense: Adam knew (in the cognitive sense) that Eve had been impregnated by another. Though Samael is not mentioned by name, like Voldemort in the Harry Potter series, the Fallen Archangel, mentioned elsewhere in PRE, is assumed to have taken on the body of the Serpent (PRE 13), seducing Eve and conceiving Cain.

This does not stop Adam from having a child with Eve as well. Like a canine female that can conceive from different male dogs within one litter, Eve is depicted as having conceived Cain and Abel, twins in the same womb, by two different fathers. Upon Cain's birth, she recognizes that he is not of the "lower beings" (of human or serpent origin), but of the "upper beings" (the angels or the archons), and names him Cain based on this immortal begetting.^[12]

Greek mythology recounts a fascinating parallel to this myth. Leda, wife of Tyndraeus the King of Sparta, is seduced (or raped) by Zeus who takes the form of a swan. She conceives Helen and Polydeuces through the god, and Castor and Clytemnestra by her husband.^[13] The wombs of Leda and Eve are divided and contain rival domains between the gods (or angels) and man. This double-sewing of the womb leads to terrible consequences for generations.

In the Greek myth, the beautiful Helen — "the face that launched thousand ships" — is abducted by Paris, prompting the Trojan War. In the Jewish myth, Cain kills his brother Abel and the subsequent tainted descendants of

seven generations culminates in the Flood, when the earth was filled with violence and all flesh had corrupted its ways on earth (Gen. 6:11–13). Both the Jewish myth and the Greek one attribute the ineluctable unravelling of fate to an “original sin” of miscegenation (literally, the progeny of mixed kind or race)—when the gods (or fallen angels) cohabited with mortal women.

The Need for Seth

Abel never has children, and once he is killed, only Cain, fathered by Samael, remains. It was imperative that Adam have another son that would be “like him”, in his own image (PRE ch. 22^[14]):

כתיב, "ויחי אדם מאה ושלשים
שנה ויולד בדמותו כצלמו" (בר'
ה:ג), מיכאן את למד שלא היה
קין מזרעו ולא מדמותו, ולא
מעשיו דומים למעשה הבל אחיו,
עד שגולד שות שהיה מזרעו
ודמותו, ומעשיו דומין למעשה
הבל אחיו, שנ' "ויולד בדמותו
כצלמו" (שם שם).

It is written, “When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he begot a son in his likeness, after his image (and he named him Seth)” (Gen. 5:3). From here you learn that Cain was not of Adam’s seed, nor in his image, [and his deeds were not like the deeds of Abel his brother],^[15] until Seth was born, who was of his seed and image, [and whose deed were similar to the deeds of Abel his brother],^[16] “he begot a son in his likeness after his image” (ibid.).

The first humans are said to have been created in God’s image (Gen 1:26–27, 5:1), making Seth *ipso facto* in God’s image as well. In PRE’s reading, the text emphasizes that Seth is like Adam, “in his likeness, after his image”^[17]—fully human, not the product of an encounter with a divine being.

PRE’s reading may also be inspired by the naming of Seth, which states explicitly that he was conceived as a replacement of Abel:

בראשית ד:כה וַיֵּדַע אָדָם עוֹד אֶת
אִשְׁתּוֹ וַתֵּלֶד בֶּן וַתִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ
שֵׁת כִּי שֵׁת לִי אֱלֹהִים יִרְעֶה אַחֵר
תַּחַת הַגָּל כִּי הָרְגוּ קַיִן.

Gen 4:25 Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and she named him Seth, “For God [*Elohim*] has given me another seed instead of Abel, because Cain killed him.”

Here Eve again attributes the conception to God, though this time she uses the more general name of God, *Elohim*, instead of the personal name YHWH,^[18] and she describes it not as a partnership but as a grant or gift.^[19] Moreover, Seth is to replace the deceased Abel—whose name Eve

finally pronounces—and Seth’s seed will, in this sense, continue Abel’s lost line.

Seth versus Cain

Adam and Eve’s third child becomes the ancestor of the line of humanity that ten generations later, leads to Noah, the progenitor of the sole surviving humans after the great flood.^[20] The name of Seth’s first son, Enosh, means just that: human, mortal or frail (Genesis 4:26). His birth is marked by the beginning of people calling to YHWH:

בראשית ד:כו וְלִשְׁתָּ גַם הוּא יָלַד בֶּן וַיִּקְרָא אֶת שְׁמוֹ אֶנֶשׁ אֵץ הוֹחֵל לִקְרֹא בְּשֵׁם יְיָ הוֹה.	Gen 4:26 And to Seth, in turn, a son was born, and he named him Enosh. It was then that men began to invoke YHWH by name.
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The progeny of Cain, in contrast, span seven generations but all of his descendants will perish in the flood.^[21] In fact, the last thing we hear about a descendent of Cain is the song of Lamech, in which he seems to be boasting about killing someone, and compares himself to Cain.

In PRE’s reading, this difference between Cain’s line and Seth’s line is not happenstance, but reflects the demonic nature of Cain’s ancestry in contrast to the human nature of Seth’s:

ר' ישמעאל אומר: משת עלו ונתיחסו כל הבריות וכל דורות הצדיקים, ומקין עלו ונתיחסו כל דורות הרשעים הפושעים והמורדים שמרדו במקום, ואמרו: אין אנו צריכין לטיפת גשמיד ולא לדעת את דרכיך, שג' "ויאמרו לא אל סור ממנו" (איוב כא:יד).	Rabbi Ishmael ^[22] said: From Seth all the generations of the righteous descended. From Cain all the generations of the wicked descended, the criminals and the rebels, who rebelled against [the omnipresent, <i>ha-makom</i>] {their Creator}, ^[23] saying: We do not need the drops of Your rain, nor to walk in Your ways, as it is said, “They say to God, Leave us alone. (We do not want to learn Your ways)” (Job 21:14). ^[24]
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The corrupt generation, all the descendants of Cain who deny their dependence on God, populate the earth prior to the Flood. The premise is that nature (and not nurture) determines the moral character of the descendants. The generations begotten of the “Bad Seed” follow the demonic corrupt ways of their forefather, Samael. Only Seth, from whom the righteous Noah descends, is of the “good seed,” in the image and likeness of Adam, and (by implication) in the image and likeness of God.

Reintroducing Samael and Angels that Lie With Women

PRE did not invent its reading of the Cain and Abel story. This reading appears in Second Temple sources, and ancient interpreters, from the New Testament to the Church Fathers, attribute the conception of Cain to this same fallen angel figure masquerading as the Primordial Serpent, whether identified as Satan, Samael, or the devil incarnate.^[25]

The rabbis of the Talmud, however, suppress the notion of cohabitation between divine beings and women altogether. They do imagine Eve having sex with the serpent (b. Shabbat 145b–146a; b. Yebamot 103b, Munich 95)—but he is not the father of her children and he is not divine:^[26]

דא"ר יוחנן בשעה שבא נחש על
חוה הטיל בה זוהמא ישראל
שעמדו על הר סיני פסקה זוהמתן
גוים שלא עמדו על הר סיני לא
פסקה זוהמתן.

For Rabbi Yohanan said: “When the serpent came upon (=had sex with) Eve, he injected filth into her. When they Israelites stood at Mount Sinai, their filth was gone, but gentiles, who did not stand at Mount Sinai, their filth never left them.”^[27]

PRE is the first Rabbinic Jewish source (the late Aramaic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan following suit) to tell the story this way, including the novel claim that Adam knew about the foibles of Eve.

The resurfacing of this motif—the seduction of Eve by Samael and the begetting of Cain—in PRE is an example of what I have called “the return of the repressed,”^[28] where the mythic content latent in the biblical text is given full narrative form in the late midrash. PRE does not conform to a rabbinic model of exegesis, but more closely follows the non-canonical writings of ancient Jewish texts from the Second Temple period (the apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, known as *Sefarim Hitzonim*, lit. the books outside Bible).

Gnosticism, Christianity, and Rabbinic Polemic

Alexander Altmann (1906–1987) suggests that the author of PRE might have been influenced by Gnostic sources that date back to the Second Temple period, drawing upon repressed midrashic traditions.^[29] This may be why the Rabbis repressed this interpretive tradition—as a polemic against the early Gnostics or even Christians, who deem Jesus to be the ultimate incarnation of the deity.^[30]

For the Rabbis, there could be no such admixture between heavenly beings and earthly creatures, no cross-breeding between angels and women. But in the fantastical world of PRE, the repressed legend returns.^[31]

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Footnotes

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1. According to BDB, s.v. “קָנָה” (§8615, Strong, p. 7069), the verb means “to get or acquire, buy, or gain,” but can also mean “create” as in Genesis 14:19 — בְּרוּךְ אֲבָרָם — לֵאלֹהֵי עֲלִיּוֹן קָנָה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ — “blessed is Avram to the Most High God, Creator of the Heavens and Earth” (cf. Gen. 14:22, Deut. 32:6, Ps. 139:13; see the parallel epithet in Psalms 146:6, עֹשֶׂה שָׁמַיִם וָאָרֶץ — “Maker of the Heavens and Earth”). See also HALOT (§8423, s.v. “קָנָה”), which offers “buy, acquire, and create.”
2. “I have gotten a man from the LORD” (KJV); “I have produced a man with the help of the LORD” (NRSV); “I have gained a male child with the help of the LORD” (NJPS); “*Kaniti/I-have-gotten a man, as has YHWH!*” (Everett Fox); “I have got me a man with the LORD” (Robert Alter), which I think is closest to the simple meaning. The word *’et*, may be construed as either a preposition, “with,” or the defined direct object marker.
3. See for example, Targum Onqelos, which translates: קִנִּיתִי גִבּוֹרָא מִן קֳדָם יי — “I have acquired a man from the Presence of God.” See also Rashi (ad loc.) Editor’s note: For the idea that all conceptions are determined by God, see Joel Baden, “[God Opened Her Womb: The Biblical Conception of Fertility](#),” *TheTorah* (2017).
4. See discussion in, David E. Bokovoy, “Did Eve Acquire, Create, or Procreate with Yahweh? A Grammatical and Contextual Reassessment of קָנָה in Genesis 4:1,” *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 19–35. For more on divine conceptions in the Bible, see, Samuel Z. Glaser, “[Isaac’s Divine Conception](#),” *TheTorah* (2018); Marc Zvi Brettler, “[Who Was Samson’s Real Father?](#)” *TheTorah* (2017).
5. See my discussion of the genre, dating, and provenance of PRE in Rachel Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed: Pirke de-Rabbi Eliezer and the Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill 2009), 3–21, 35–42. This article is based on a selection from chapter five, “Adam, Eve and the Serpent: The First Version of the Fall (PRE 13),” 98–103.
6. Notably, the LXX translation has Elohim (θεός) in this verse instead of YHWH, which LXX always renders as κύριος meaning “the LORD;” while YHWH only refers to the main Israelite deity, the usages of Elohim are broader. The text reads: Ἐκτησάμην ἄνθρωπον διὰ τοῦ θεοῦ — “I have gained a man through/by way of God.” As I discuss below, Second Temple period texts already read the Cain and Abel story to suggest that Cain was the child of a divine being. Perhaps some of these texts had Elohim as their main text. Alternately, the LXX translators may have known this tradition, and have rendered YHWH as θεοῦ to open up the possibility of a being,

other than YHWH, as the one responsible for Cain's conception.

7. The Zohar (Gen 35b) also adopts this allegorical interpretation of the Eden narrative.

8.

דכתיב "ומפרי העץ אשר בתוך הגן" (בר' ג:ג). תנא רבי זעירא אומר "מפרי העץ" אין העץ הזה אלא אדם שנמשל כעץ שנאמר "כי האדם עץ השדה" (דברים כ:יט) "אשר בתוך הגן" (בר' ג:ג) אין "בתוך הגן" אלא לשון נקיה מה שבתוך הגוף. "אשר בתוך הגן" (בר' ג:ג) אשר בתוך האשה. ואין גן אלא האשה שנמשלה לגן שנאמר "גן נעול אחותי כלה זו" (שה"ש ד יב).

מה הגנה (ויניציאה: הגנה הגנה כל) הזה כל מה שנורעה היא צומחת ומוציאה, כך האשה הזאת כל מה שנורעה הרה ויולדה מבעלה.

It is written, "But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden..." (Gen 3:3). It was taught in a Baraitha, Rabbi Ze'ira said: "Of the fruit of the tree" — "tree" is none other than Adam (man), who is compared to the tree, as it is said, "For man [ha-Adam] is the tree of the field" (Deut 20:19). "Which is in the midst of the garden" — "in the midst of the garden" is none other than a euphemism for what is in the body. "Which is in the midst of the Garden," that is within [the body] of the woman. And the garden is none other than the woman who is likened to a garden, as it is said, "A locked garden is my sister, a bride" (Song 4:12).

Just as with this garden, whatever is sown therein, it produces and brings forth, so (with) this woman, what seed she receives, she conceives and bears as a result of sexual intercourse.

9. The Hebrew and English translation are based on the 1st ed. (Constantinople 1514), checked against Dagmar Börner-Klein's bilingual German-Hebrew edition, *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter 2004), supplemented with reference to 2nd ed. (Venice 1544), and other manuscripts.

10. Samael is not mentioned by name here, but based on the connection between Samael and the serpent PRE establishes in chs. 13–14, where the story of the sin is retold, it is clear that Samael is who the text means here. Based on an alternative manuscript (no longer extant), Friedlander translates the phrase here as: "[Samael], riding on the Serpent, came to her and she conceived"; the MS En866 reads: בבעילה קרב אליה רוכב נחש ועיברה את קין ("in sexual intercourse, the Snake Rider approached her and she conceived Cain"). But, at least in the 1st printed ed., the Hebrew is clearly feminine: *rokhevet nahash*.

11. Similarly, in the Sethian Gnostic tradition, when Eve uses the Tetragrammaton in naming her son—"I have gotten a man with the LORD" [*qaniti 'ish 'et-YHWH*] (Gen 4:1), she is alluding to the lesser deity or the demiurge—Samael (or Ialdabaoth). According to this sect of Gnosticism, Cain is genetically corrupt as the offspring of the demiurge and Eve, while Adam's son, Seth, is the only true offspring of man who is made in the divine image: "he begot a son in his likeness after his image" (Gen 5:3). The same tradition is preserved in Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 4:1 and 5:1–3. See the discussion in Stroumsa, *Another Seed: Studies in Gnostic Mythology* (Leiden: E.J. Brill 1984), 38–53. On the peculiar form of Sethian Gnosticism, which PRE seems to draw from, see J.D. Turner, "The Gnostic Seth," in

Biblical Figures Outside the Bible, eds. Michael E. Stone and T. E. Bergren (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International 1998), 33–58.

12. Drawing from PRE, the late Aramaic Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Gen 4:1 also attributes Cain's conception to Samael:

ואדם ידע ית חוה איתתיה דהוה חמדת למלאכא ואעדיאת וילדת ית קין ואמרת "קניתי לגברא ית מלאכא דיי":	And Adam <i>knew</i> that his wife Eve was desired by the angel [Samael], and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. He was like the angels and not like humans, so she said, "I have acquired a man, indeed, an angel of the LORD." (See, Kugel, <i>How to Read the Bible</i>, 61).
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Second Temple sources about divinely conceived children also assume that they look different somehow. See discussion in, Samuel Z. Glaser, "[Demigods and the Birth of Noah](#)," *TheTorah* (2020).

13. Notably, early midrash, which solves the problem of where humans come from by positing that Cain and Abel were born with twin sisters (e.g., *Genesis Rabbah* 22.2, *Conflict of Adam and Even with Satan* 1.74–75), makes the parallel between the midrashic story and the Greek myth even starker.
14. This translation is based on the 1st ed., checked against Börner-Klein *Pirke de-Rabbi Elieser*, 235–237. For a semi-critical edition of the Hebrew text, see Appendix E in Adelman, *The Return of the Repressed*, 285–287. Here, I have added punctuation and references to the exact citations from the Tanakh. I have also supplemented the printed edition with reference to four manuscripts, as well as Radal's edition (Warsaw 1852) and the first edition. Much of this chapter is dedicated to expanding on the causes of the flood, including the genesis of the giants by the Fallen Angels. See my article, "[Reintroducing the Myth of the Fallen Angels into Judaism](#)," *TheTorah* (2015).
15. This phrase appears in the printed edition but not in the manuscripts.
16. This phrase appears in the printed edition but not in the manuscripts.

17.

בראשית ה:ג וַיְחִי אָדָם שְׁלֹשִׁים וּקְמָא שָׁנָה וַיֻּלֵּד בְּדְמוּתוֹ כְּצִלְמוֹ וַיִּקְרָא אֶת־שְׁמוֹ שֵׁת.	Gen 5:3 When Adam had lived one hundred thirty years, he begot in his likeness, after his image, and called his name Seth.
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18. Perhaps, in response to the slaying of Abel and Cain's banishment, she has lost that overweening confidence in her own powers.
19. This is a word-play on the verb שִׁית, meaning "to put, set, or place" (BDB §9914, s.v. "שִׁית" p. 1011, Strong 7896), but which can also connote "to constitute, make one (dir. obj.) something (indir. obj.)," as in 1 Kings 11:34, וַיֵּשֶׂא אֶשְׁתִּי, "I will make him prince"; see also Isaiah 5:6 and 26:1; Jeremiah 22:6; Psalms 21:7, 84:7, 88:9, 110:1; and 2 Samuel 22:12. In this sense, Eve is implying that God has made this seed into another/different one [*zer'a aher*] to replace Abel [*taḥat hevel*]; that is, "different" than Cain's "bad seed."
20. See the genealogical list of ten generations from Adam to Noah via Seth in Genesis 5:3–32.

21. See the list of seven generations in 4:17–24: 1) Cain; 2) Enoch; 3) Irad; 4) Mehujael; 5) Methujael; 6) Lamech, who then begot 7) Jabal and Jubal (through Adah) and Tubal-cain (through Zillah). None of these survive the flood. This explains the exegetical tradition which renders “sevenfold” (vengeance for the murder of Cain) as up to the seventh generation (Gen. 4:15 and 24). See James Kugel, “Why Was Lamech Blind?” in *In Potiphar’s House* (San Francisco: Harper Collins: 1990), 91–103.
22. Rabbi Shimon in Higger’s edition and in the Epstein manuscript (the basis for Friedlander’s English translation).
23. An emendation based on Higger.
24. A parallel to this appears (in some versions) of the previous chapter of PRE:

רבי ישמעאל אומר: משת (וינציאה: משם) עלו ונתייחסו כל דורות הצדיקים ומקין עלו ונתייחסו כל דורות הרשעים המורדים והפושעים במרום.	Rabbi Ishmael said: from Seth arose the lineages of all the righteous generations, and from Cain arose all the lineages of the wicked generations that rebelled and sinned against the Almighty.
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This paragraph does not appear in all the manuscripts—not in Enelow, nor in the Epstein manuscript (the basis for Friedlander’s English translation), nor in Higger’s version.

25. See, for example, 1 John 3:10–12; Tertullian, *On Patience* 5:15; the (Gnostic) Gospel of Philip 61:6–10; 4 Maccabees 18:7–8; Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 4:1; and *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 21 (discussed in depth later). See the discussion in James Kugel, *How to Read the Bible* (New York: Simon & Schuster 2007), 60–61, and *Traditions of the Bible* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 1998), 147, 169.
26. Moreover, the villain in this story, Samael, is almost all but absent in classic rabbinic midrash.
27. Other texts see the serpent as a lecherous creature. For example, *Genesis Rabbah* 18:6 suggests that the reason the Serpent is introduced immediately after Adam and Eve are described as “naked” (Gen 2:25) is because he saw Adam and Eve engaged in sexual intercourse and desired her (see also *Gen. Rab.* 19:3, 22:2). This is implied in Eve’s excuse: “The Serpent beguiled me and I ate” [הנחש השיאני ואוכל] (Gen 3:14). The Talmud expounds: “The Serpent set his eyes on what he did not deserve. Therefore that which he wanted he was deprived of, and what he had (in hand) was taken from him” [הנחש נתן עניו במה שלא ראו לו לפי' משהו ביקש לא ניתן לו ומה שהיה בידו ינטלוהו] (b. Sotah 9b). The first phrase is understood—that the Serpent desired what was not rightfully his, coveting another man’s wife. But the second phrase, Rashi interpolates: “the Primordial Serpent set his eyes on Eve and went into her, as it is said, ‘The Serpent *beguiled* me...,’ which is the language of sexual relations and marriage” [נחש הקדמוני נתן עניו בחווה ובא עליה והיינו דכתיב “הנחש השיאני” לשון תשמיש ונשואין הוא] (*loc. cit.*). See the discussion in Stephen T. Lachs, “Serpent Folklore in Rabbinic Literature,” *Jewish Social Studies* 27 (1965): 167–184.
28. The expression is Freud’s, borrowed by Boyarin, to explain the relationship between the biblical text and certain trends in midrashic exegesis, “which makes manifest the repressed mythic material in the Bible’s “textual subconscious” (Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* [Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1990], 94).

29. Alexander Altmann, "The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends," in *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England 1981 [orig. 1945]), 1–16. He traces many of the rabbinic traditions on the enmity of Satan (or Samael) towards Adam and his glorification by the angels to Gnostic Myth.
30. For Christian sources, see Ephrem's *Commentary on Genesis*, in which Ephrem paraphrases the curse thus: "you shall go about on your belly because you brought pangs upon womankind...And I will place enmity between you and the woman and between your seed and her seed because by your *fraudulent show of love* you deceived and subjected both her and her children to death" (emphasis added, S. Brock, *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* [Crestwood N.Y.: St. Valdimir's Press 1990], 219); see also 2 Enoch 31:6. The legend was most probably known to Paul, who refers to the Serpent as having "beguiled Eve in his craftiness"; see 2 Corinthians 11:3, and 1 Timothy 2:14–15; and Protoevangelium of James 13:5, and 4 Maccabees 18:8. cf. Gerald Friedlander's comment, *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, 1st ed. (London, 1916), 4th ed. (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981), 150–151, [n. 5].
31. This is connected to PRE's belief that the Primordial History will be recapitulated in the End of Days. Just as evil (manifest in the genetic matter of Cain) was wiped out in the flood, so evil would be eradicated in the eschaton.



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